

J.G. Mooring

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Folk stuff - [??] Tales - Story [????]

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Rangelore.

Tarrant County, Dist,.#7 [56?]

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J.G. Mooring, [?], living at [?] E. Second St. Fort Worth, Texas, was born in Rains County, Texas, 1868. His father, J.T. Mooring, conducted a cattle and cattle ranch and [??] grew up in the saddle”.

J.C. Mooring followed range work until he was 25 years old, at which time he discontinued to learn the carpenter trade.

His story of range life [?]:

“My early life was spent on the range. In fact, I was born on a ranch, in Rains County, Texas, in the year 1868. My father operated a ranch, running not less than 1000 head of cattle and 400 hosses. His brand was the square and the compass and two [?] marks on the ear.

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"That section of Texas, at that time, was devoted ranches of the one hoss outfits, that is small herds. If a rancher did not run 5000, or more, critters he was called a small fry. The large ranches were located South and West of Rains County.

"The cattle in my section, at that time, all run on the open range and at the round-ups there would be present hands from 10, or more, outfits. Later, that is in the 80's, the wire fence made its show and the ranges started to be tied up with wire.

"How to ride a hoss and handle cows, was soaked in by me as I grew from a stripling to a buckaroo. When I was big enough to straddle a hoss I began to ride. I began to swing a loop when I was big enough to make an attempt to [?] a rope. That was one of the things I did for [?] of [?], and could smear a calf when I was not more than knee high. C12 - [??] - Texas 2 So, when I had stomped around for 12 years I could swing a loop right pert.

"When I was around 12 years old I took my turn at doing a tolerable bit of the work. The first work I did, earned me the handle of worm saw-bone.

"The cattle had a bantering for screw worms. It was a country with a tolerable lot of breaks, in spots, and they would receive, more or less, cuts and screw worms would get into those cuts. The [?] had a slave concoction that we applied to the cuts that would kill the worms.

"My job was to ride among the critters and locate those that needing the saw-bone's attention.

"When I located a critter needing the concoction I would cut it out to the edge of the herd, then loop and throw the animal. While my hoss held a taut line I would slip to the ground, run up to the critter and daub the concoction on the sore spot.

"You may wonder how it was that a wild steer would lay quiet long enough for me to do the job. Well, it was a job that called for right smart speed, but easy for one that was not a scissor-bill. This is how the matter shaped up. First a good hoss was needed, one that was

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fast and true. When the loop was smeared and the hoss set, the steer is always traveling at his best speed, but when the critter takes up all the slack there is a sudden stop and the critter hit the earth and it is not like lighting on a pile of feathers. That spill always takes the wind out of the sails and it takes a short spell befor the 3 animal can get the its sails set and during that [?] will lay quiet. That is when I would slip off the hoss and make the daub. I had the act down to a [?] eye. When the rope left my hands, I took off pronto, and befor my hoss, Zip, was sit I would be on the ground making for the critter, and generally be ready to make the daub befor the critter had hit the earth.

"I want to [?] this, I was just a kid and no one put any ideas into my [?] about how to do the job, but [?] it out my self and others followed my knack.

"I was plumb set on the work and never got away from hankering to do daubing. My hoss, Zip, was stuck [?] the work too. He knew his [?] in the line and never pulled a [?]. When I finished a daub, he would stand shaking his head, up and down. That was his manner of prattling, "Waddy that was a keen trick". Befor mounting again I would pat him on the neck and then he would paw the ground, that was his pattle, "Let's go and get another".

"As I stated a while ago there were a lot of breaks in our neck of the country and some of the brush was powerful thick. During the round-up it was no custard pie cutting critters out of the brush. We were what the cowhands called brush-whackers and the name was fitting to us, because when riding at a tolerable good rate of speed, after a wild steer the waddy took many [?]. A person might as welltry to find a hoss theif in heven as to work in the brush unless the party was a good rider. When I babble about a good rider, I calculate one that can swing down and lay to the side, first one then the other 4 of the hoss while the hoss is running. If the rider missed ducking a limb, he pronto will find himself on the ground and possiblly with a busted conk. We worked the critters twice a year, that was in the fall and spring. At those time we would brand and cut out the sale stock.

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“Brush critters got to know that they can manage better in the brush, so they put up a hamsome tussle to stay there and after they are out will break for the brush like a rattler coming out of a box it they get half of a chance. Especially, the [?] horns, that is the [?]/ or several years old, they are full of wisdom and take on tolerable lot of “fitting” ideas with age.

“Some of those [?] horns would give us much agitation by breaking for the brush and we were forced to adopt a counter move. We would snub the critter and then tie a long pole, about 10 feet longcrosswise to their head. A critter shaped up with a pole would hit the brush about twice and then take on a shame look like a sheared sheep and then remain put. When we would get a steer dressed to go to Sunday school, as we called putting a pole on it, we would turn it loose. The critter would pronto make a drag for the brush and when he hit the trees that pole would stop his front end while the hind end was still going. That would agitate the animal and he would take on religion and we [would?] have no more trouble.

“While chinning about ornery steers, I recall a waddy who, with the help of a steer, put on an op'ra for us one day. The steer was a [?] horn, one about 10 years old 5 and had wisdom-[?] in his conk, so that he had bested the cut out for several years. There were a few like that, they would keep hid during the day and come out to graze at night. This particular time the steer forgot, or something fooled him, and we smeared him with the loop and was fixing to pole him so he could not hit the brush. Sandy Smith, a cocky fellow that always wanted to show how good he was, insisted on doing the snubbing alone. First I will detail what snubbing is. It is taking a half turn of the rope around a tree, or post, to hold the animal. In making a snub, one always should give the critter the short end of the rope, the shorter the better. The for that is if If the animal is a fighter, as this animal was and a pure snake blood, the critter cant get to the snubber. The critter is agitated around the post until it is wound up to the post and then it can be worked.

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"Now, back to Sandy, this time Sandy missed, because the steer was too much for him, and the critter got the long end of the rope. Sandy was afraid to turn the rope loose and had good reasons, because the critter was putting on an Indian war dance. Sandy was running around the tree, trying to keep out of the steer's horns and expecting that some one of us would throw another loop. We calculated wrong, because we were sitting in the op'ra splitting our guts laughing and didn't have time to spare pronto, so the steer caught up with Sandy. Well sir, at the point Sandy was talking to the angles and looking like a wet hen. That mossey horn was sure riled and to end the show we shot the steer, fearing for Sandy's sake, we would not take time to throw a loop. 6 "Folks seem to like tom listen to prattle about stampedes. In the brush country and with small herds stomps are not so apt to come about. The smaller the herd the less apt are the critter to go on a stomp and in the brush country, when a storm shows up, they can find shelter in the thickets. In a parire country shelter can't be found and the critters sense that and when a buster of a storm descends [shooting?] sky-fire they just naturally get their bristles up. /

"The worst worst stampede danger in the brush country comes from some strange animal running into the herd, especially when the critters are bedded. A handfull gets the scare and it spreads like the itch, to the others.

"The worst stampeer that I had occasion to deal with took place during a storm, one of those East Texas, busters which took place in the night. When the night is dark and the rider can't see you have/ to put your trust into the hoss and when you hit a patch of brush all that can be done is lay at the side of the hoss and put yourself in the hands of Jupiter.

"This night that I have in mind, the stampede, I reckon, was caused by wolves that run into the herd to pull down a calf.

It came all of a sudden. Everything was quiet, except the weather, we night riders were circling the herd when suddenly we heard the brush a-rattling and hors horns clashing. They were sure coming away from what scared them prompt and fast. It was the fore part

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of the night and we did no better than a man trying to scratch his ear with his elbow. Those critters kept us 6 dragging all night. About five miles, from where they started, was a deep wash and they headed that way. We knew that if they would hit that wash on the run they would fill/ it full and there would be food for the buzzards. We riders bunched to turn the herd away from that wash and we got the job done. In the morning Bud Fisher's hoss was at the corral minus Bud. All of us had left yards of hide hanging on the brush and needed to give the cuts attention, but did not wait to daub the cuts, or to fill our flue with chuck. We hit the trail, pronto, to hunt for Bud and we found him at the bottom of the wash. He was sitting on the ground rolling a health pill out of his Bull Durham, as we arrived.

"Why in hell are you sitting there like an Indian squaw", we rattled to him.

"Well, I have no hankering for chuck and walking is a triffle discomfoting right now", he shoots back.

"What is agitating you", we queried.

"Just my leg cracked and it tickles me when I walk, that gets me to laughing so hard that I have to sit down" and sure enough his leg was broke.

"What happned was with his hoss on a dead run they hit the wash, the hoss stopped suddenly and away went Bud and he failed to land square.

"Our critter lose was none, but we were a week getting them bunched.

"We had no truble with Indians, that trouble was away up in the skellet and New Mex, but we had the vermin 8 known as rustlers. They kept us on the run. Frequently the ranch men would get together and there would be a party at which the rustlers would be naturlized and turned into good citizens- that is made into buzzard food. Such work was all done on the quiet and to have an invite to one of those parties, a person had to have the pure brand stamped all over his hide.

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"I have lain out out, under cover, many days watching to get the brand mark of rustlers. Whenna rustler was spotted, for sure, it was not long until it would be reported in the neighborhood, thattthe party had decided to [?]/ (travel) to some other section, or, it would bereported that he was found naturlized hanging to a tree.

"Dont get the idea that the men that did naturalixing were not good law abiding citizens. The condition that existed for a time pushed them into it. If they had not taken matters in their own hands they would have been put out of business. [About?] half of the trials for rustling resulted in the skunks being turned loose. We little cowman reckoned that there was some connection between people getting some benefit out of rustling and the law.

"Besides the cows our ranch run about 500 hosses that were raised for saddle stock. They were a mixture of the Spanish and a racing breed. We sold the unbroke as well as the busted bronco. My delight was busting hosses.

"Our method was to rope and blind the critter then put the saddle on [?], with that done we would mount and then 9 the fun began. Sometimes one would surprise me by not being fussy, to speak of and from that kind to the unbreakable. I straddled two different bosses that never were forced to call it quiets. While they failed to spill me, they never would ride. They would buck untillthey could not move and then wait till they got their sails full of wind and go to pitching again. I gave each of those critters the gut hooks till I was tired out, but it did no good. I worked two days with each of those beast and then took my hat off to the devils. Dad sold each of them for five dollars. First telling the buyer the try we had made to bust the critters.

"If any one tells you that a hoss don't have power to reason with their conk, he just don't know hosses.

"The mustanges stayed together, but run in bunches. There would be about a dozen mares and a stallion in a bunch. The stallion was the boss and the leader. As a rule the

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stallion had wisdom enough to stay away from a rider and of course the mares would follow their stallion.

"I have with help, working in relays, ran a bunch of hosses for three days before we could force the herd into a corral. It was a case wearing the animals down so that we could get close enough to smear the critters.

"Now, hosses, in the wild, will run in a circle covering a distance of about 15 miles, and keep fairly well to the same course. One rider would chase the critters for a while and then another would take up the run. When dark came we would have to lay off, but take up the chase in the morning at daylight. 10 "When I chinned about running hosses [for?] three days, that gave you some idea about the staying power of the mustang. Of course the riders hoss was carrying weight, but the hoss would get spells of rest.

"I have rattled about the work and the hard part of the life on a range as we had it, but we had the time for a little play.

"The big doings were the hoe-downs. Most of the ranchowners would once, or twice, a year give a shendig. It was considered unsociable for a ramrod [?] the boys to a shendig at least once a year.

"[?] it was given out that a hoe-down was to take place at a certain ranch manche, that was an invation to all buckaroos and gals to come to the doings. Some waddies would do a 50 mile jiggle to get there. All the fixings of the main room would be [?] out and the room made ready for action. Before the stomping started, everybody would line their flue with chuck set up by the ramrod, and that allowed some of the buskarooos a chance to get a taste of beef from off their own range.

"The tunes agitated by the fiddlers were many, but the old standbys were "Sally Gooden, The Devils Dream, and Hell Among the Yearlings".

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"The [?] would bunch all kinds of human critters. The cowhand in [?] full rigging, except his gun. Always, the guns would be left on the out side hanging on the saddle horn. That was a sign that the party was there on a friendly 11 call and not gunning for someone. The gals were scarce as hen teeth in the cow country, so every available one would be rounded up and then some of the cowhands would have to take the heffer brand and do the dance part of a lady.

"At one of the stomps put on at our manche, there came on the floor, at the prompters call, four couples to make a set for a square dance, that I can't forget and it came about accidentally.

"One of the gals was a half blood Mex, with a peg leg, one had brick red hair, one was too big for a women and too small for a mule and weighed over [?] 200 [pounds?], the other one was a pure bean pole. No one gave the shape up much mind untill the dancing started. That peg-leg [sure could?] manipulate her peg, in the 'do-ce-do' and that plump gal bounced around like a ballon, with the tall gal a-swinging and the red head doing her part that set was an op'ra. Everybody was eyeballing the couple and began to split their innards. The catgut agitators got to laughing so hard they stopped agitating, until they could get their wind.

"During the days that we could get off from work, often the waddies would engage in contest of roping, riding and sports of other kinds.

"For the benefit of them that never of the game called 'chicken grab', I'll explain how we played it. We would bury a chicken in the sand and leave just its head sticking out of the ground. The waddies, on hosses, would ride pass on the run and reach down to grab that chicken. The chicken would 12 [?] its head, dodging the hand that reached for it. The one that grabed the chicken with the least number of tries would be the high-cock-a -do. Then the losers would take out after the winner and try to take the chicken away from him, and then you would see some riding for sure. Generally there would be no feathers on

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the chicken when the boys got through. It was hard on the chicken, but fun for the boys. I have seem two riders flank the winner, one on either side, and while the hosses were high tailing it the waddies would be fighting for that chicken. That was top fun and I have often wondered why a show like that have not been added to the rodeos.

“At night sitting around the camp fire, or the home bunk the boys were always telling stories, or [singing?] songs, if they were not busy with the cards. The only song that I can [?] the words together was the one sang in the morning by the first one up. It was sung to get the other fellow out of bed. The words are as follows: “Bacon in the pan Coffee in the pot Get up and get it Take what the cheater spots.”